

“MAJOR THEMES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS: MICAH.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Sermon Texts: Micah

Introduction.

We have seen with some of the Minor Prophets that there is no information about the prophet, where he's from, what time period he prophesied in and to whom he was prophesying. Micah answers all those questions in the first verse.

Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

He is from Moresheth (or Moresheth-gath, 1:14) in Judah, a fertile agricultural area about 25 miles south west of Jerusalem. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all kings of Judah which places him around 740 to 700 BC. And his prophecy is address to Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of Israel and Judah.

He is a contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea, prophesying just a little after them since he doesn't mention the earlier king Uzziah. Isaiah was from Jerusalem. Micah was from a small farm town, he could have been a farmer. He may not have been much, but when the Holy Spirit filled him, it didn't matter who he was. His words weren't from him or about him. He declared the Word of the Lord. Not the word of Micah, not the word of a king, but the divine, inspired, supernatural word of the Lord God Almighty Himself.

Do you know one of the ways you could tell a true prophet from a false prophet in the OT? The false prophets preached what the people and the leaders wanted to hear. They preached what would get them compliments and raises.

Micah 3:11 Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.” (ESV)

They preach peace, peace when there's no peace. They preach love, love when there's a coming wrath. They preach grace, grace when there's a need to call for holiness and righteousness.

But a real prophet sounds altogether different.

Micah 3:8 But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. (ESV)

When God speaks He thunders, when He walks on the earth the ground shakes. When He comes the mountains will melt and the valleys will split open. The time of His coming is called the great and terrible day of the Lord.

No wonder the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai wanted Moses to stand between them and God to protect them from God.

Exodus 20:18-21 Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off [19] and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” ... [21] The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. (ESV)

This is what churches pay their pastors to do, to stand between them and God and to protect from God. We joke about *hellfire and brimstone* preaching and we don't want that in our church. We want to feel good when we leave church.

Yes, God is a Father God and yes God is full of mercy, grace and love. But God is also holy, and a God full of holy righteousness, holy justice, holy vengeance and fierce wrath. He is to be loved and feared.

There is a reason the books of the prophets are still in the Bible and are still the Word of God to us and not just to the people a long time ago.

When God testifies against His own people His judgments are just, this testimony is true, His evidence irrefutable and His sentence is sure. God always promises to punish His rebellious people.

God's case against Judah, 6:1-7.

Micah is God's prosecuting attorney to bring God's case against Judah.

Micah 6:1-8 Hear what the LORD says:

Arise, *plead your case* before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

[2] Hear, you mountains, *the indictment of the LORD*, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel.

[3] “O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!

[4] For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

[5] O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

[6] “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

[7] Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

[8] He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (ESV)

God reminds Judah of all He had done for her, His justice and mercy, how He led them out of bondage and protected them and walked with them the entire journey.

Then in verse 6 Judah mounts her defense, trying to appease God with an offer of burnt offerings and sacrifices of rams and oil, even their firstborn son if He wants.

They don't get it, they have forgotten what God requires. They treat God like an idol, as if some rituals should satisfy Him. Maybe even a son? Why this is an abomination to God. How is this possible? How have things gotten to this point? Why have they lost their way?

Two words: *unrighteous leaders.*

Micah 2:1-2 Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds!
When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand.
[2] They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away;
they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. (ESV)

Micah 3:1-2, 5 And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?—
[2] you who hate the good and love the evil,
who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones,
[5] Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray,
who cry “Peace” when they have something to eat,
but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. (ESV)

Micah 3:9-11 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel,
who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight,
[10] who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity.
[11] *Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price;
its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say,
“Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.”* (ESV)

Micah 3:11 is a summary of how bad things have become, a summary of how far they have fallen.

So back to the court cast in Micah 6:1-8. God answers their defense in verse 8.

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you
but to *do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (ESV)

Do Justice.

Justice is directly connected to the character and nature of God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (ESV)

We have a strong sense of justice because the universe is created by a just God and we are made in the image of a just God. We get our sense of justice from God.

Justice extends beyond what is legal or illegal, to what is ethical. Lying, cheating, greed, covetousness, adultery may all not be illegal but they are unethical and a violation of God's justice. We are bound not only to do what is legally right but what is morally right.

God cares about justice. He ordained leaders to execute his justice. When leaders are unjust the wrath of God is stirred up. The justice of God will be poured out on the unjust.

Leadership matters in this. Leaders who call good evil and evil good are rebelling against God. Leaders who give approval to practice evil as our President did this past week bring down judgment on a nation. Moral and religious standards can't be ignored and nothing happen if there is a just God ruling the universe.

"Sin doesn't work. The history of the whole world is the history of people trying to figure out a way to make it work, but it never does. Sin doesn't work" (Doug Wilson).

Doing justice applies to all of us. Those who use their power unfairly or unjustly will come under a great judgment. To act justly means that those for whom we have responsibility benefit from our power, influence and resources.

How do we treat others? How do we treat those who serve us or wait on us or check us out or repair something, or clean our hotel rooms or care center rooms? We are to be imitators of God. We are to walk in holiness and righteousness.

Love Mercy/Kindness.

Mercy here is that wonderful Hebrew word, *hesed*, which means steadfast love, unfailing love, covenant kindness.

We are not just to show mercy/kindness, but to love it. Nowhere do we imitate God more than when we show and give mercy. It's truly God-like. God says be like me, do what I do.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in *steadfast love*. (ESV)

We should absolutely love mercy since God has been so incomprehensible merciful toward us.

I have received mercy. I have received mercy upon mercy time and again. Without it not a single sin of mine would be forgiven. I owe absolutely everything I am, everything I can do and everything I have to God's mercy. Apart from Him I am nothing and I have nothing.

1 Corinthians 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? (ESV)

Showing mercy is helping anyone who is in need. If someone has a need and you have some means, then show the mercy of God to them by helping. Showing mercy is helping someone who has wronged us.

Walk Humbly with Your God.

What is the greatest commandment? To love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor.

Do justice and love mercy are the second half of the Ten Commandments, walk humbly with your God is the first half.

Your God. The Lord is my shepherd. It's personal, real, intimate.

Humbly. He must increase, I must decrease. He must be lifted up, I must bow down.

Walk. Discipleship, it's what we do every day, a path, a journey, a long obedience in the same direction. Not working hurriedly, but walking humbly. This is daily.

Ephesians 5:15-16 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (ESV)

If we walk humbly with our God, then doing justice and loving mercy become more do-able.

Who can do these things? Does God ever require us to do something we can't do?

Yes, of course. He requires us to be holy. He requires us to obey the law. He requires us to be saved. He requires us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

Who does justice and loves mercy and walks humbly with their God?

Who uses their power and authority to bless and help and benefit others?

God asks of us something we can't do and then sends Jesus to do it for us.

Micah 5:2, 4-5a But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

[4] And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

[5] And he shall be their peace. (ESV)

Finally in Jesus we have a righteous leader who sets a righteous example and gives us His righteousness. In Christ we have His power to love and walk in His ways.

Micah's name, "Who is Like God." Who is like God? Jesus. Who of us can do what God does? Those who are in Christ Jesus, who have His power and love and life in us by the Holy Spirit.

Just as God displayed the wonders of His salvation to Israel when in Egypt, so God again displays the wonders of His justice and mercy to the world through another Savior, Jesus.

Application and conclusion.

Micah 4:1-2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, [2] and many nations shall come, and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." (ESV)